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## CREEK FARM: THE ARTHUR ASTOR CAREY SUMMER HOME

### Creek Farm and the Summer Colony at Sagamore Creek:

Arthur Astor Carey (1857-1923) purchased forty acres of the original Benning Wentworth farm in 1887, soon enlarging his holdings to 119 acres in partnership with his brother. In 1887-8, on the portion of his land that bordered the tidal Sagamore Creek, Carey constructed the summer home that would become known as Creek Farm.

Carey chose the Boston architect Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow (1854-1934) to design the home. Longfellow was a Harvard acquaintance of Carey's and of J. Templeman Coolidge III (1856-1945), who led a group of prominent Bostonians in establishing summer homes near Sagamore Creek. Having just left the office of Henry Hobson Richardson, Longfellow had established an architectural partnership that would become noted for its design of public buildings, collegiate structures, and private homes. In New Hampshire, Longfellow designed the nearby Hall House on the Wentworth-Coolidge property, and remodeled a former poultry barn, "the Hennerly," as a guest house for the Coolidges. In 1888, Longfellow designed a large summer home (since greatly remodeled) for Ellen and Ida Mason in Dublin. The Carey House survives as Longfellow's most ambitious New Hampshire commission. A rendering and floor plan of the house were published in *The American Architect and Building News* for May 12, 1888.

Arthur Astor Carey was an important figure in the summer colony that coalesced near Sagamore Creek during the 1880s. That colony evolved to include artists, sculptors, musicians, architects, and historians. Carey himself displayed a multitude of interests, ranging from archaeology and astronomy through art and music to sailing and fine horses. A descendant of John Jacob Astor, Carey had greater wealth than the other summer residents around Sagamore Creek, and he expressed that wealth through somewhat more ambitious projects than were common among his neighbors. In 1902, Carey built Little Harbor Chapel on his property beside Little Harbor Road, making the nondenominational church building available for public use. In 1905, he entertained the delegates to the Russo-Japanese Peace Conference at his home.

Carey had studied art in Paris with his close friend and Harvard classmate J. Templeman Coolidge III, who bought the Benning Wentworth Mansion and twenty-four acres of the former Wentworth farm in 1886. Coolidge and Carey were both trustees of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, supporters of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston, and (together with architect Longfellow) proprietors of the arts-and-crafts Dedham Pottery in Massachusetts. Together, Coolidge and Carey acquired most of the ancient country seat of royal governor Benning Wentworth.

Creek Farm occupies one of the earliest sites to be brought under cultivation in New Hampshire. The property is thought to have been occupied by settler Nicholas Rowe as early as 1640. Other adjacent farms extending along Sagamore Creek were settled at comparable dates, making the farms along the tidal waterway some of New Hampshire's earliest cultivated lands. The Rowe farm eventually passed into the possession of Mark Hunking and, through him, to Benning Wentworth. A map of the Wentworth estate, made in 1812 by the cartographer John G. Hales, shows that the area eventually purchased by Arthur Astor Carey had previously been orchards and fields that the Wentworths had acquired from the Shortridges, another family of early settlers along Sagamore Creek. Some of the fieldstone boundary walls that still cross Creek Farm mark property lines that were recorded on the Hales map and were already ancient in 1812.

After following J. Templeman Coolidge to the Sagamore Creek area, Carey introduced another member of the summer colony. In 1890, he sold a portion of his holdings, containing the ancient "Martine Cottage," to Boston architect R. Clipston Sturgis (1860-1951). Sturgis was a nephew (and professional successor) of John Hubbard Sturgis, the architect who had designed Carey's colonial-style main home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A proprietor of the Dedham Pottery along with Coolidge, Carey, and Longfellow, Sturgis became an early student of the colonial architecture of Portsmouth.

Across Sagamore Creek stood the home of another prominent Boston family, that of Harvard professor Adams Sherman Hill. The Hill summer home was an eighteenth-century farmhouse that had belonged to the Portsmouth merchant Jacob Sheafe.

Together, these summer residents transformed Sagamore Creek from an area of ancient, somnolent farmsteads to a summer colony of unusual diversity and sophistication. Among the summer residents were several writers of note. American historian Francis Parkman, the father-in-law of J. Templeman Coolidge, spent several summers at the Wentworth mansion completing his monumental history of the French and English in North America. The region hosted other summer residents like Barrett Wendell, author and professor of English at Harvard, who had a summer home at New Castle. Wendell's neighbors on the island were Edmund Clarence Stedman, a poet and broker from New York, and John Albee, a philosopher and local historian. Also summering in New Castle was the artist Edmund C. Tarbell, whose international reputation at the turn of the twentieth century attracted other painters and etchers to the area.

### **Architectural Significance of Creek Farm:**

Creek Farm survives as the most ambitious domestic commission of architect Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow in New Hampshire. As originally built in 1887-8, the house was a one-and-a-half story gambrel-roofed dwelling, surrounded on three sides by a broad porch and displaying a high stone foundation on the south side, facing the creek. Carey soon had the architect enlarge the rectangular house. The first addition was a short, gambrel-roofed extension on the east, enclosing an area that had once served as a walled kitchen yard. This first addition is recognizable today as the connecting link between the original dwelling and its eastern wing.

A far more significant evolution occurred when the western wing was added to the house in the early 1890s. Connected to the original block by an open carriage passage at ground level, the western wing was connected to the main house at the second story and was marked by a massive chimney of cobblestone masonry. This wing provided guest rooms in a house that originally had had accommodations only for family and servants.

Shortly after the western wing was finished, Carey added a balancing eastern wing, also furnished with a huge stone chimney. A declivity east of the original house caused the architect to support the eastern wing on a strikingly high stone foundation that rises a full story above grade on the east. A passageway penetrates the foundation beneath the wing, echoing the entryway through the western wing. The first story of the eastern wing contains a music room, paneled in the Tudor style, reflecting Carey's interest in the violoncello.

The juncture of the western wing and the main house is marked by the semi-octagonal entrance tower of the original building. The juncture of the eastern wing is similarly defined by an octagonal tower having a third-story clock dial facing into the courtyard.

The courtyard created by the original house and the two extensions is further defined by a low stone retaining wall that runs east and west beyond the northern ends of the two wings. Terminating on the east at a large elliptical stone well curb, this wall encloses an area that is planted with perennials, shrubs, and a single, large katsura tree.

On the exterior, Creek Farm retains architectural integrity from the period of the early twentieth century. The design of the original house, as published in *The American Architect and Building News* of 1888, remains evident and well preserved. Each subsequent phase in the evolution of the building is clearly defined. Probably because the same architect apparently designed the entire structure as we see it today, each element harmonizes with the others.

Visible changes that occurred to the exterior in the later twentieth century include the insertion of some new windows that serve some of the apartments, and the enclosure of part of the original open porch at the western end of the house. The shingled walls of the house, now painted white, would originally have been painted or stained a dark color.

The architect of Creek Farm, Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, achieved prominence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born in Portland, Longfellow was a nephew of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He graduated from Harvard in 1876, then studied architecture at the institution that became the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1876-78) and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (1879-81). Longfellow first worked in the office of Henry Hobson Richardson, the most prominent American architect of his time. Following Richardson's death in 1886, Longfellow organized the partnership of Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow.

Among Longfellow's non-domestic designs were the city hall in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and the Oliver Wendell Holmes and Abraham Lincoln schools in Boston. At Harvard, Longfellow designed the Philips Brooks House; the Semitic Museum; the buildings of Arnold Arboretum; two chemical laboratories; and Gibbs Memorial Library. At Radcliff, the architect designed Agassiz House and two dormitories that were built on the college campus between 1904 and 1907. In Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Longfellow designed a memorial chapel at Mountain Cemetery. He also designed the distinctive original stations of the Boston Elevated Railroad.

Longfellow was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a member of the Boston Society of Architects. Like Arthur Astor Carey and J. Templeman Coolidge, Longfellow was a trustee of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Sharing Carey's and Coolidge's love of the sea, Longfellow also served as president of the Boston Marine Museum. In every respect, Longfellow was a member of the summer colony at Sagamore Creek.

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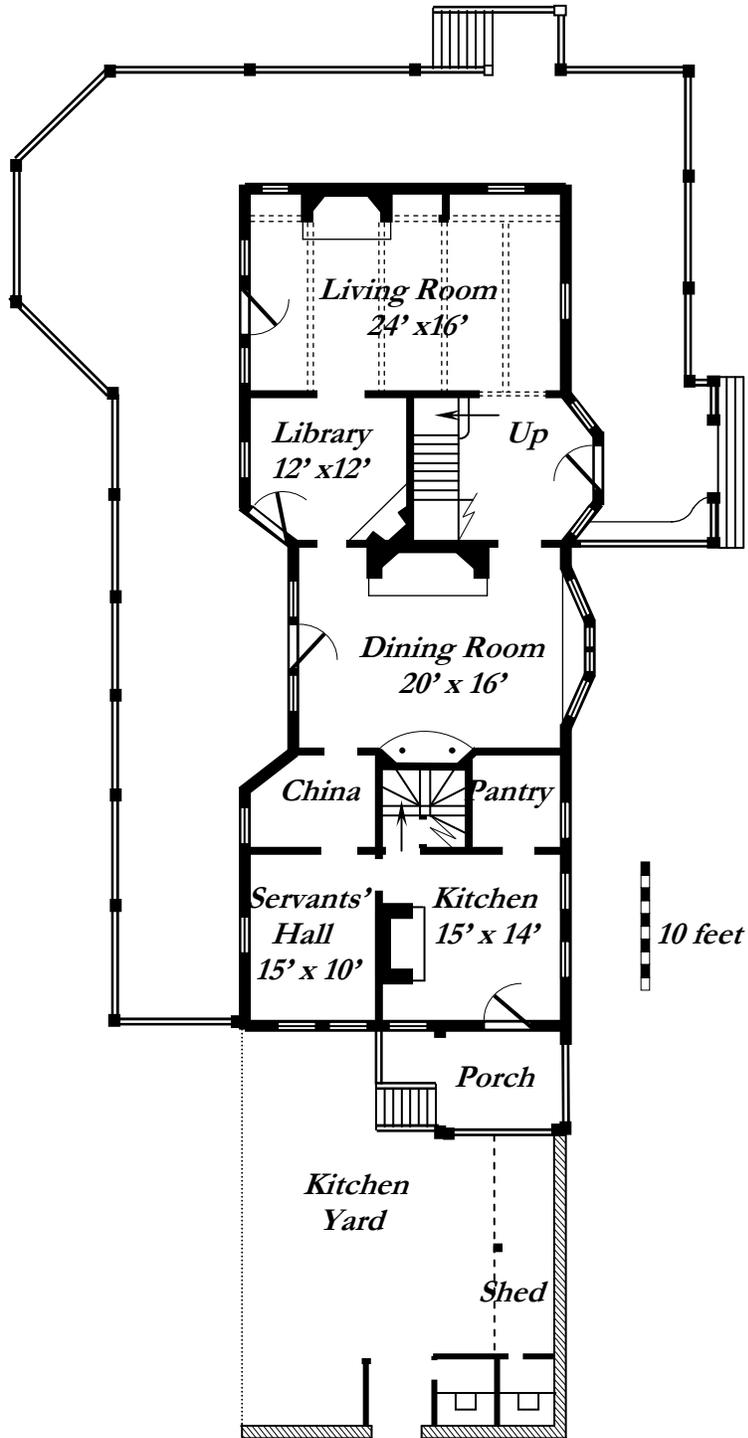
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*Arthur Astor Carey Cottage, "Creek Farm" (1887), Little Harbor Road, Portsmouth, New Hampshire*  
*First Floor Plan, as published in the American Architect and Building News, 23, No. 646 (May 12, 1888).*